Further appropriate action in the matter will be taken, if considered necessary, after the interrogation of the apprehended persons has been completed and full details in regard thereto have become available.

Long Pending Defence Projects

2293. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some of the highly prioritised defence projects and acquisition proposals, initiated since 1984, are yet to fructify due to absence of long-term financial commitments in the Defence Planning;

(b) if so, what are these proposals and whether it is not a major drawback in our Defence Planning especially when the country is surrounded by belligerent forces; and

(c) whether these proposals would from part of the Ninth Five Year Plan for the Defence forces and when this is likely to be finalised?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) The schedule of completion of some defence projects has slipped due to various factors such as resource constraints, long gestation periods in development of advanced systems and, in selected cases, the effect of international export control regimes. Such slippages are taken into account in the continuous process of threat evaluation and defence planning to meet anticipated threats. On-going and uncompleted defence projects related to development and acquisition have been included as relevant in the 9th Defence Five Year Plan which has been approved by the Government.

Punishment posting at Siachin

2294. SHRI ASHOK MITTRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the tackground of developments which led to the punishment posting of a number of officials to the remote region of Siachin;

(b) whether Government are contemplating similar measures for other defence personnel who faulted on their job; and

(c) whether representations have been received from the officers concerned against the measure taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) No officials has been given "punishment posting" to Siachin. It has, however, been felt that it is essential for officials working in the Ministry to have adequate familiarisation and first hand experience of ground realities so that they can have adequate perception of, and sensitivity to, the requirements of defence personnel, working in adverse conditions and the requirements of equipment. It is proposed that officers working in the Ministry of Defence will underego familiarisation exercises in different parts of the country where—defence personnel are deployed—at the beginning of their tenure in this Ministry and also at regular intervals during their tenure. In the first instance, two officials who were dealing with procurement of a high priority equipment for troops deployed in Siachin have been to Siachin to undergo familiarisation of one-week duration in that region.

(c) Representations received from the officers concerned were considered and they were suitably advised that decision to obtain first hand knowledge of ground realities in Siachin should not be construed punishment.

रक्षा सेनाओं में कमी किया जाना

2295. **श्री जनेश्वर मिश्र:** क्या रक्षा मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि सरकार ने सशस्त्र सेनाओं के संख्या बल में पचास हजार की कमी करने का निर्णय लिया है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो इस संबंध में विंग-वार (नौसेना, थलसेना और वायुसेना) तथा कमान-वार ब्यौरा क्या है; और

(ग) इस कमी के कारण क्या हैं तथा इस कदम का भारतीय सशस्त्र सेनाओं की क्षमता और मनोबल पर क्या प्रभाव पड़ने की संभावना है?

रक्षा मंत्री (श्री जॉर्ज फर्नान्डीज): (क) और (ख) सरकार ने शासस्त्र सेनाओं में सैनिकों की संख्या में कटौती के संबंध में कोई निर्णय नहीं लिया है। तथापि सेना ने 31.3.1999 तक 50,000 सैनिकों की कम तैनाती किए जाने के लिए एक योजना तैयार की है। यह योजना केवल सेवा के सभी सेनांगों और सेवाओं पर चरणबद्ध तरीके से लागू की जा रही है।

(ग) इस योजना का अभिप्राय धन की बचत करना है जिसे सेना के आधुनिकीकरण कार्यक्रम तथा सैनिकों के जीवन स्तर में सुधार के लिए उपयोग किया जाएगा।

सैनिकों की कम तैनाती संबंधी योजना बनाते समय सेना की समाघात तैयारी सहित सभी बातों पर विचार कर लिया गया है।

Cutting down of trees at Tilpat Firing Range

2296. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Air Force has cut down 4.9 lakh trees and shrubs at Tilpat Firing Range near Hindon Air force Station, Ghaziabad in preparation for a fire-power demonstration without seeking the mandatory sanction from either the Ministry of Environment or the Ministry of Defence; and

(b) if so, the reaons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) The Air Force authorities have informed that in 1997 while reactivating the Tiplat Range mostly wild Kikar buses and small size trees were removed as the thick vegetation was obstructing the view of the target area and was also considered a flight safety hazard. However, an inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the full facts.

Sale of CSD items to non-entitled persons

2297. SHRI S. NIRAIKULATHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the top-officials of Canteen Stores Department are authorised to sell CSD items to persons not entiled to CSD facilities;

(b) whether it has been brought to the notice of Government that a number of items, mostly liquor, have been sold to persons not entitled to CSD facilities at CSD canteen, A F Station, New Delhi under the authority of Manager/Deputy Manager/other Air Force officials for the last several years; and

(c) what action has been taken against the persons who had misused their authority?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SRHI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir. No one is authorised to sell CSD items to non-entitled category of persons.

(b) No specific complaint has been recevied by the government.

(c) Does not arise in view of reply to (b) above.

SCs/STs/OBCs in Defence Services

2298. SHRI S. NIRAIKULATHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any survey has been done to find out the prcentage of SC,ST, and OBC persons serving in Defenc forces, both as Officers and in other ranks;

(b) if not, whether Govenrment would underetake a survey to find out these figures; and

(c) whether there is any proposal to implement reservation policy in the Defence services?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) No, Sir.